

Residents chime in on North Avenue

A austinweeklynews.com/News/Articles/11-19-2018/Residents-chime-in-on-North-Avenue--



During Nov. 15 meeting, community members expressed concerns with, desires for the corridor

Monday, November 19th, 2018 3:35 PM

By [Igor Studenkov](#)

Contributing Reporter

Residents and business owners from the Galewood and Oak Park sides of North Avenue got a chance to share what they think should happen to the major corridor during a Nov. 15 public hearing held at Galewood's Redeemer Church, 6740 W. North Ave.

The North Avenue District, Inc., an area nonprofit focused on how North Avenue is developed, the village of Oak Park and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning have been collaborating on an improvement plan for the section of North Avenue that is between Harlem Avenue and Austin Boulevard. The Nov. 15 meeting was part of that planning process.

The plan would set development priorities for the corridor, delving into what kind of new businesses should setup in the area, what kind of housing should be built nearby and what can be done to improve the corridor's appearance and branding.

Earlier this year, residents and businesses filled out surveys to collect the information, while CMAP delved into the corridor's demographics and economic data. The Nov. 15 meeting gave CMAP a chance to refine some of the information and give residents an opportunity to share suggestions and give feedback.

The next step is for the Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel to meet some time in December to analyze the data and offer its own suggestions.

The crowd at last week's meeting was roughly evenly split between Galewood and Oak Park residents, said Cindy Cambray, a CMAP outreach planner.

During the meeting, residents got a chance to vote on a series of multiple choice questions, which Cambray said was meant to help CMAP dig deeper into some of the responses they received from the survey.

When asked what kind of businesses they would like to see on North Avenue, the majority of attendees voted for grocery stores, followed by specialty stores.

The voters also indicated a preference for more casual dining restaurants. When it came to the appearance of businesses, most attendees voted for more attractive business facades, a preference that was followed by better lighting.

When it came to traffic safety, attendees indicated that crossing North Avenue safely was their biggest concern, along with traffic congestion and a desire for landscaped medians.

The residents were also given a chance to offer comments and suggestions. One issue that kept coming up was how the appearance of area buildings made attendees not want to shop inside them, with one attendee commenting that the "currency exchange style" bulletproof glass made her feel unsafe.

Judith Alexander, the chair of The North Avenue District, said that there is a common perception that the portion of the corridor east of Ridgeland is more dangerous. She said that although the statistics don't support that perception, she felt that the high number of vacancies along the corridor and the problematic appearance of some businesses help reinforce that misconception. The negative perception, Alexander said, hurts all North Avenue businesses.

Alexander said that she wanted to figure out a way to generate funds to help business owners improve the appearance of their establishments and to spruce up vacant lots.

"We need to have something like a [Special Service Area] on both sides of the street," she said.

Another issue was the lack of garbage bins on the Galewood side of North Avenue. Tom Drebenstedt, who sits on one of Taliaferro's resident advisory committees, said that the 29th Ward aldermanic menu funds have been allocated for new garbage cans.

"We're in the design phase and we're working with the Chicago Department of Transportation and we're going to have garbage cans with Galewood identity [signage]," he said.

In the aftermath of the meeting, the residents from both sides of North Avenue said that they were pleased with what they heard.

"I'm excited to see so many neighbors here," said Christine Esposito, of Galewood. "Thinking about making North Avenue corridor more pedestrian-friendly is very exciting to me. It's exciting to see the city and the Village of Oak Park getting together to improve the state of North Avenue and see what might be possible."

Delores Smith, also of Galewood, said that she thought the workshop was "very impressive and very helpful."

She said that she'd like to see more economic growth and beautification in the corridor.

Wendy Epstein, of Oak Park, said that she was pleasantly surprised that somebody was studying corridor improvements at all, let alone asking residents what they want. She said that she took the survey and intends to keep participating.

"I'm really concerned about what's going to happen with the Sears [building at the North/Harlem intersection]," Smith said. "I'd like to see some businesses on North Avenue that I'm interested in. I basically don't shop on North Avenue. [I'd like to see] better restaurants, most interesting stores. It's not a very interesting shopping district."

CONTACT: igorst3@hotmail.com

Facebook Connect

Log in with Facebook!

[Login](#)

Answer Book 2018



To view the full print edition of the Austin Weekly News 2018 Answer Book, [please click here](#).

Quick Links

Sign-up to get the latest news updates for Austin and Garfield Park.



[Advertise](#)

[Classified](#)

[Multimedia](#)


[Contact us](#)

[Submit Letter To The Editor](#)

[Place a Classified Ad](#)

Latest Comments

[Ms. Jones: You are absolutely correct. I had a bad...](#)

By Don Bradshaw 

On: [What will the poor get out of...](#)


[What a powerful story. This article adds insight to my...](#)

By Vanessa Jones 

Posted: September 24th, 2018 6:29 PM

On: [A one-man movement to help the...](#)

[it is not even necessary to respond in an negative or...](#)

By Steve Harris 

Posted: September 23rd, 2018 4:32 AM

On: [The problem with praise dancing](#)

[I agree with the Author Arlene Jones. I enjoyed this...](#)

By Toni Carthan 

Posted: September 10th, 2018 8:46 AM

On: ['La Esclava Blanca' is a...](#)

[Bigheartscantlose.blogspot.com Apologize for the typo...](#)

By Adam Fabino 

Posted: September 4th, 2018 8:02 PM

On: [Scott Fabino, bringing houses back...](#)

[Bigheartscantlose.blogspot.com NOT ".org"...](#)

By Adam Fabino 

Posted: September 4th, 2018 7:59 PM

On: [Scott Fabino, bringing houses back...](#)

[Bigheartscantlose.blogspot.org Scott was a prime...](#)

By Adam Fabino 

Posted: September 4th, 2018 7:57 PM

On: [Scott Fabino, bringing houses back...](#)


[OMG truly amazing show. Just finished the last...](#)

By Cicely Peoria Hudson 

Posted: August 28th, 2018 1:48 PM

On: ['La Esclava Blanca' is a...](#)

[PLEASE correct your information stating that...](#)

By Anna Torges Stuart 

Posted: August 15th, 2018 11:14 PM

On: [Under Pressure: Bell's palsy...](#)

[This article is critically important in understanding,...](#)

By Ruth McLaren 

Posted: August 15th, 2018 1:50 PM

On: [Changing the story for...](#)

[View All Comments](#)